

Columbia River Salmon and Steelhead Conservation

The majority of salmon and steelhead populations in the Columbia Basin are now listed as either threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Fisheries and other human activities that effect these populations must be scrutinized through a consultation process with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to ensure that impacts do not threaten the continued existence of the populations. Fisheries must also be scientifically analyzed to ensure that the established fishery conservation levels are consistent with recovery of the listed populations.

The lower Columbia fisheries conservation levels have been established through the ESA consultation process. The fishery development processes and allocation policies reflect distribution of fishing opportunity between the various user groups within the bounds of the legal and biological conservation responsibility. The states have been deeply engaged in the consultation process and are satisfied that the conservation levels in these fisheries adequately fulfill the states mandate to preserve and protect the fishery resources.

Conservation and Fishery Forums

There are several inter-governmental forums in which conservation measures are developed and implemented, including structure of fisheries, to meet conservation objectives. Most include public unless associated with a closed court process.

U.S. v. Oregon

- Fishery and hatchery plans are developed to meet natural fish rebuilding objectives and to fairly share harvest as per Federal Court order.
- Scientific review through Technical Advisory Committee consisting of biological staff from states, tribes, USFWS, NMFS.

Columbia River Compact

- Columbia River fisheries regulated through Oregon and Washington Compact to achieve consistent regulation in joint waters of the Columbia River.
- Compact must meet ESA and other conservation requirements in fishery regulations.
- Public testimony at Compact hearings

Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC)/North of Falcon

- Annual public process to plan salmon fisheries in the ocean and freshwater consistent with conservation and harvest sharing objectives
- Magnuson-Stevens Act and ESA guides conservation
- Scientific review of conservation measures
- Public testimony

Recovery Planning

- Fish Recovery Boards through out the Columbia River Basin have developed or are developing recovery plans for ESA listed fish.
- Recovery plans are developed in local watersheds with local government and public involvement.
- States contribute technical expertise to process

Hydro Biological Opinion (Biop)

- Remanded by Federal Court action.
- Collaborative development of new Biop by sovereign parties.
- Hydro operations and off-site mitigation.
- Public comment period.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC)

- Governor appointees from four Northwest states.
- Charged with balancing the needs of natural resources and other uses of the river.
- Recommends fishery projects to be funded by BPA through their Fish and Wildlife Program.
- Public forum with Independent scientific review.

NMFS ESA Forums

- States, tribes, and federal government involved in decisions concerning operation and configuration of the federal hydro-system.
- Technical review and recommendations of annual operations to benefit listed fish.
- State Governors are lead for ESA Forums.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) License of Dams

- Non-federal dam re-license agreements include fish and wildlife conservation measures
- States negotiate Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) and resource protection settlements.
- Hatchery investments, habitat investments, fish reintroduction plans, hydro operations.

Fishery Visioning Process
WDFW
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